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Library cuts hours

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"We have to take steps to rectify this," she concluded. "It is a step toward patrons borrowing and returning books at both libraries."

In the end, it was agreed a test coding would be attempted before the processing system is finalized.

In order to gain control over the wage budget which last year was nearly 15 per cent over the basic hourly costs, the personnel committee proposed Mrs. LaBerge's hours be capped at 40 hours per two-week pay period in 2008. Her hours are currently broken down into 11 hours as librarian in Castleton and nine hours for administrative work in her role as CEO. With the changes in hours which start on March 1, she can opt to work the 12 hours the Castleton branch is open and reduce her admin hours to eight, or continue with the 11 she is now working.

By the same 4-1 vote, the board determined the CEO may only bill the 40 hours she is contracted for, and for any meetings approved in advance by the personnel committee. In the current situation, the board gets an e-mail from Township Chief Administrative Officer Christie Alexander with a question asking the reasons for additional hours. Now, there will be no extras.

As head of the Colborne library branch, Mrs. Houston will work 50 hours every two weeks.

In a discussion that appeared at times to be going in circles, the board returned again to the question of library hours. Mr. Prentice offered that, if the board was planning to introduce high speed Internet service to the Castleton branch, it shouldn't be closing, to which Mrs. Klem responded, "We're not (closing)."

"Why not have it open one hour and meet at the door?" proposed Mr. Prentice who wondered what it costs per hour to keep the Castleton branch open. Mrs. Klem replied it was costing \$25 a book.

Turning the discussion in another direction, Mr. Prentice asked if anyone in Castleton had been asked about hours.

After listening for some time, Cramahe Councillor Pat Westrope, who sits on the board, reminded him that the board had been talking about this for a year and nothing had been done.

Mrs. Klem referred to a survey she did at the Castleton library last fall. Very few people were going into the library. When she asked why circulation was down by 1,000 over the previous year, the answer she got from CEO Sue LaBerge was, "I don't know."

Mrs. LaBerge said, "They're coming here (to the Colborne branch where the meeting was held). Lorna (Houston) has more books and more choice." Later in the debate, Mrs. Westrope brought the board's attention to the circulation figures for Codrington and concluded, "If you have the product, they will come."

When talk of changes finally wound down, the group turned itself to establishing the hours for the Castleton and Colborne branches.

Library cuts hours, streamlines ordering

CHRONICLE Feb 28/08

BY BOB OWEN
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The Cramahe Library Board has reduced the hours at the Castleton Branch, controlled the hours of its CEO and moved to streamline its ordering process.

The decisions made on a series of motions put forward by the board's personnel committee Feb. 20, were made as the board approached the end of a 3.5-hour meeting after much discussion and a degree of rancour.

Board member Randy Prentice attempted to stall the process even before it got going, questioning if there were enough board members present to make these decisions.

Board Chair Ed Greenwood advised there was a quorum even though three members of the eight-person board were absent. Nathalie McVeen had sent in her proxy vote for all motions.

In introducing the motions, board member Peggy Klem stated they were being presented following a lengthy conversation with Peggy Malcolm, Library Development Consultant of the Southern Ontario Library Service.

The first motion proposed having all new books processed in Colborne. Previously, those destined for the Castleton Library were inventoried and bar coded there.

Under the system passed by a 4-1 vote, books destined for Castleton will be transferred once the codes have been attached by librarian Lorna Houston in Colborne.

Library CEO Sue LaBerge was the first to speak on the topic, wondering how the system would work when the bar codes for the two libraries don't match.

She was assured by Mrs. Houston that the bar codes will be set as they are placed on the books.

The passing of the motion after a convoluted discussion appears to begin to address the allegation of inefficiencies in the Castleton branch.

Board member Marie Prins wanted to know how the coding would be

implemented.

The response by Mrs. Klem launched a detailed discussion of library operations.

In the personnel committee proposals, hours that Mrs. Houston previously gave up would be re-instated, Castleton Library hours would be cut from 17 to 12 hours per week and the times changed. Mrs. Houston's additional hours would be picked up by adding two hours to the Colborne branch hours.

Board member Randy Prentice was the sole member of the board who appeared to maintain constant opposition to the proposals. He questioned how the Castleton branch could be improved if its hours were reduced.

When he couldn't recall having previously agreed to cutting hours, Mrs. Klem noted they hadn't - it was part of the current series of motions.

New library hours

As of March 1, the Castleton branch will open Wednesdays and Fridays from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Colborne branch will open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. It will open Fridays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Next month members hope to look at ways to improve the Castleton branch.

She observed the northern branch was open six days a week. Some days, no one came. She proposed the board select three, four-hour blocks and keep the times the same so that people would begin to know the hours.

In one of the scenarios she threw out to the group, weekdays at the Castleton branch would alternate with those in Colborne so there is a library open every day except Sunday. If the library is open from 3 p.m.

to 7 p.m., its hours would fall in line with the Colborne branch, making it easier to remember.

Ms. Prins liked the alternating days as it will fit in with her summer program. With one student running it, the person can cover two locations.

Then, the meeting got bogged down by a run of operational queries regarding how the system would operate, how Mrs. Houston's hours would be allocated, and whether the computers were capable of performing the required functions.

Ms. Prins took the floor and reminded the board that it was the board's job to make the libraries more efficient and address the difficulties with Castleton and its low circulation.

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